

Springfield, PA — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-7), toured Elwyn, to highlight his support for vocational rehabilitation programs.

“People with developmental disabilities should be measured by what they can do, not by what they can’t,” noted Joe. “I applaud Elwyn for working to make that a reality every day.”

Elwyn is a non-profit human services organization that provides education and rehabilitation services for individuals with special challenges and disadvantages. Founded in 1852 by a physician from Delaware County to care for children with mental retardation, Elwyn today provides services for people with special needs of all ages, including state-of-the-art residential services, programs in education, rehabilitation, vocational and employment services, and other supports for living for more than 12,000 children and adults every year. Yet their goal remains the same: to help people with special needs maximize their potential and live happier, meaningful lives. While many of the services are available at the original 400-acre site in Media, PA, Elwyn also supports programs in schools, community sites, workplaces, and individual homes in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and California.

“For years, people with disabilities were seen as ones who needed only our charity, and this belief yielded to a lack of opportunity and prejudice of people with developmental disabilities,” added Joe. “But thanks to organizations like Elwyn, America is beginning to create opportunity and inclusion for all people with disabilities.”

In Congress, Congressman Sestak is a member of the Education and Labor Committee, where he has advocated for education and training programs for all, including vocational rehabilitation programs for individuals with disabilities. He recently held two education summits to provide an opportunity for education stakeholders in the 7th Congressional district to discuss key educational issues with policy makers and education experts. The first summit consisted of panel discussions on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Special Education, led by the Honorable George Miller, Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, and the Honorable Terrell Halaska, Assistant Secretary of Education. The second summit explored the challenges facing our Higher Education system and Advanced Training programs and included Congressman Rubén Hinojosa, the Chairman of the US House Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness as a guest panelist. Congressman Sestak has also signed on as a major sponsor of H.R. 627, the Keep our PACT Act, which would fully-fund No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by 2014.

Yesterday, Congressman Sestak toured the Don Guanella School, which has educated and served young men and boys who have a primary diagnosis of mental retardation or other developmental impairments, to highlight his support for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.*

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